

## OMH Trail Data / History

### Sunset Trail

#### Hot Springs National Park

Sunset Trail is the longest trail (9.7 miles) in Hot Springs National Park. The trail encircles the park from West Mountain to Gulpha Gorge campground, passing the highest point in the park and the most remote areas of the park. It has several steep climbs, regardless of direction. Starting at West Mountain Summit Trailhead, it crosses West Mountain, Music Mountain, Sugarloaf Mountain, and Fordyce Mountain; then crosses hwy 7 at Stonebridge and into Gulpha Gorge. It has additional trailheads at Blacksnake Road, Cedar Glades Road, and hwy 7 (near deSoto Park and Gulpha Gorge Road). The most well known SSS, Balanced Rock, is about half way around the circle. By doing different pieces of the trail, a variety of hiking experiences can be improvised, particularly in conjunction with other Hot Springs NP trails.

- Planning notes:**
1. Segment mileage: West Mountain to Blacksnake Road = 2.9 miles. Blacksnake to Cedar Glades = 2.8 miles (spur to Balanced Rock = 0.2 mi). Cedar Glades to Desoto Park = 3.3 mi. Desoto Park to Gulpha Gorge = 0.7 mi.
  2. Sunset Trail plays a key role in the annual Dawn-to-Dusk hike.
  3. From West Mountain TH to Desoto Park is a good, local 8-mile hike good for late in season on Thursdays or local hikes in lieu of an overnight. The same hike can be made a loop trail by following Cedar Glades Road into town and then bck up West Mountain from the Whittington Ave Trailhead.
  4. Saturday options include Desoto Park to Cedar Glades and back (5.6) or combinations with Gulpha Gorge and West Moutain. A good hike to get Saturday hikers into the "back country" of HSNP is to do just the stretch between Blacksnake Road and Cedar Glades Road (3.0 one-way; 6.0 round trip, which includes Balanced Rock).
  5. Balanced Rock is a good lunch spot for longer hikes.
  6. Mickie's BBQ (corner of hwy 7 and Gulpha Gorge Rd) is a great place to eat after a hike.

- Access Notes:**
1. Trailheads: There are five trailheads -- West Mountain, Blacksnake Road, Cedar Glades Road, Desoto Park, and Gulpha Gorge. All are within about 10 minutes of each other driving.
  2. Parking: Big lots at West Mountain, Desoto Park and Gulpha Gorge. Limited parking (4 to 5 cars) at Cedar Glades or Blacksnake.

**For additional info:** HSNP Trail Map. An overview brochure is available at the Visitor's Center that shows all the trails in the park. There is a more detailed set available at the Visitor's center, including four sheets, but you must ask for these. National Park Website has trail description and GPS map: <http://www.nps.gov/hosp/planyourvisit/trails.htm>. Tim Ernst: "Arkansas Hiking trails" (p. 151). Covers only a portion of trail.

### Recent Hikes:

**Feb 19, 2011**      **Leader:** Jim Gifford      **59 (+ 6 non-**      **OMH Special Event**

**Route:** Fordyce VC; Promenade; Peak Trail to woer; HS Mountain Trail to Gulpha Gorge Tr; to Gulpha Gorge. Sunset Trail to Desoto Park; Cedar Glades TH; Sugar Loaf Mountain; Balaned Rock; Blacksnake TH; Music Mountain, West Mt.; Mountain Top Trail to West Mountain Trail and Canyon Trail back to Rolando's Restaurant

**14.3 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**

*Ninth annual Dawn-to-Dusk event. It keeps getting bigger and better. 65 participants; 59 hikers logged 465 miles. Cool, overcast day; high in 50s. Changed the first leg of hike to go up Peak Trail to tower. Ten people helped as leaders, sweep, trailhead captains, and shuttle drivers.*

*Fourteen people (\*\*) did the entire 14-mile loop. Paula led the five "rabbits" (Marv, Rick, John, Jim C), setting a new course record in under five hours. Also going 14 miles were: Anita, Brent, Debbie, Jeannie, Joe, Judith, Marie, Joy (sweep) and Jim (hike lead). Lunch at Balanced Rock for the non-rabbits.*

*Forty people partied at Rolando's; restaurant opened the patio just for us.*

**sss:** Balanced Rock and view from  
Views from Music Mountain

**Nov 13, 2008**      **Leader:** Rex Greer      **5 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday /  
local in lieu of  
overnight**

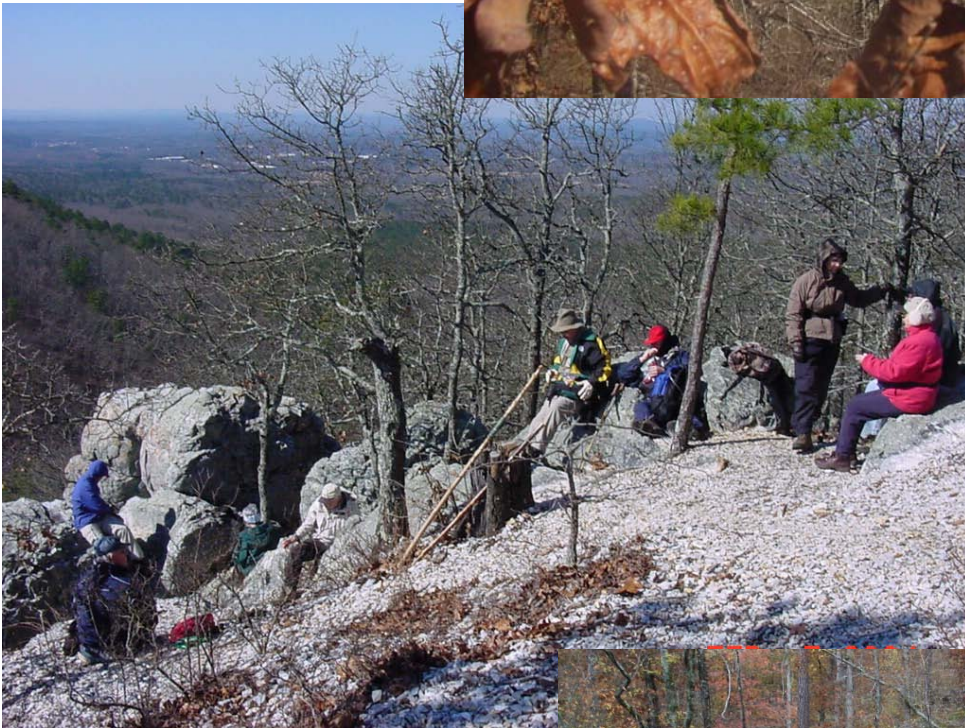
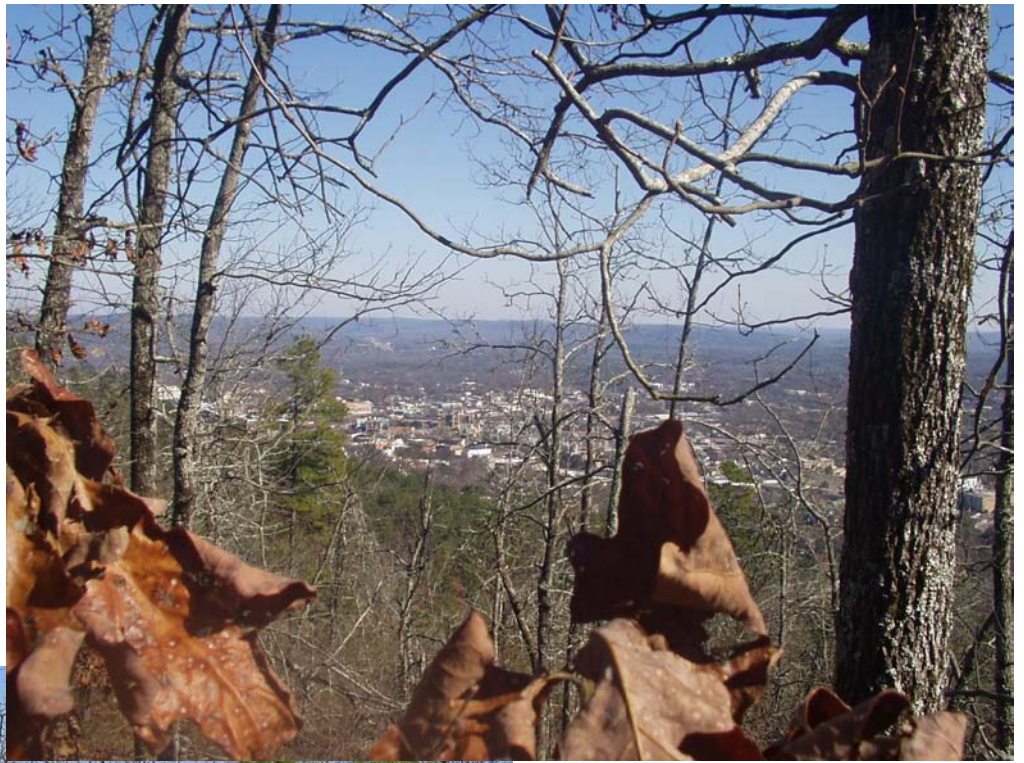
**Route:** West Mountain Overlook to Blanced Rock to Cedar Glades trailhead; down road to Central; up Canyon Trail to West Mountain Trail to start.

**9.0 miles**

*Five of us hiked a beautiful fall morning, while large group was on an overnight to Oklahoma.*

*Mileage includes an estimate for the amount of road walking (Cedar Glades TH to foot of Canyon Trail off central.*

West Mountain Trailhead



Balanced Rock  
lunch break

Creek crossing at  
Gupha Gorge Trailhead



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- March 13, 2008**      **Leader:** Larry Kizer      **17 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday**  
**Route:** Whittington Trailhead up Mountain Top Trail to Sunset Trail; over Music Mountain to Blacksnake Road and return  
**8.8 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**  
*Beautiful day with a big turn out. An overnight trip this week was cancelled due to snow at Buffalo River, so lots of interest in this hike on a beautiful spring morning.*  
*Completed 8.8 miles in 3.5 hours.*  
**sss:** Views from ridge line
- 
- Oct 20, 2007**      **Leader:** Anita Moore      **18 Hikers**      **OMH Saturday**  
**Route:** Blacksnake Road to Cedar Glades & return  
**6.0 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**  
*Saturday hikers get to experience the 'back country' of Hot Springs National Park*  
**sss:** Balanced Rock
- 
- Mar 10, 2007**      **Leader:** Phil Simpson      **12 Hikers**      **OMH Saturday**  
**Route:** West Mountain Summit to Cedar Glades TH  
**5.8 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**
- 
- April 13, 2006**      **Leader:** Ken Schultz      **14 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday**  
**Route:** West Mountain clockwise past Balanced Rock to DeSoto Park and Mickie's BBQ. About half the group did the side trip to Balanced Rock (+0.4 mi)  
**8.5 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 4**  
*Ken set a new speed record for this route: 8.5 miles in 3.5 hours.*  
*Lunch at Mickie's BBQ after hike.*  
**sss:** Balanced Rock.  
Views from ridge tops.
- 
- Jun 2, 2005**      **Leader:** Don Baggett      **11 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday**  
**Route:** West Mountain TH to Blacksnake to Balanced Rock to Cedar Glades to DeSoto Park to Mickie's BBQ  
**8.9 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**  
*Last Thursday hike of season - "Hike to Mickie's" for BBQ.*  
*Mike Zeller met us at BBQ joint.*  
**sss:** Clouds below us in canyons; balanced rock
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- Dec 30, 2004**      **Leader:** Rex Greer      **18 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday**  
**Route:** Whittington TH up West Mountain; across Music Mt; Sugarloaf Mt (stop at Balanced Rock); down Cedar Glades Rd to Central Ave. Up Canyon Trail to West Mt Trail and back to Whittington.  
**9.5 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 4**      **Scenic Rating 3**  
*Gate on road up West Mt still closed at 8 am. Re-planned start of hike to Whittington (original plan to start on top of West Mt.)*  
*Snack stop at Balanced Rock.*  
**sss:** Views from ridges; Blanaced Rock
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- Mar 25, 2004**      **Leader:** Rex Greer      **7 Hikers**      **OMH Thursday**  
**Route:** Loop from West Mountain TH to Blacksnake Rd to Cedar Glades Road TH; then down Cedar Glades Rd to Canyon Trail (behing Mt Valley Water) to Oak Trail back up West Mt to starting point.  
**8.0 miles**      **Difficulty Rating 3**      **Scenic Rating 3**  
*Rain in first 3 miles made ladies turn back; rest enjoyed a rain free hike and a good 8 mile loop.*  
*This was a new and interesting loop combination for this hike.*
- 8/24/2011

## OMH Trail Data / History

|   |   |                        |                                     |  |
|---|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| -----   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>Feb 21, 2004</b>   | <b>Leader:</b> John Cramm*  | <b>18 Hikers</b>       | <b>OMH Saturday</b>                 |  |
| <b>Route:</b>   | Blacksnake Road to Cedar Glades TH and return (Stop at Balanced Rock)   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>6.4 miles</b>  | <b>Difficulty Rating 4</b>  | <b>Scenic Rating 3</b> |                                     |  |
| <i>Weather was awesome; clear and 50 deg.</i>   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>sss:</b> Balanced Rock   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| -----   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>Jul 10, 2003</b>   | <b>Leader:</b> Jim Gifford  | <b>6 Hikers</b>        | <b>OMH Summer Trip</b>              |  |
| <b>Route:</b>   | Desoto Park to West Mountain overlook; including Balanced Rock spur   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>9.4 miles</b>  | <b>Difficulty Rating 4</b>  | <b>Scenic Rating 3</b> |                                     |  |
| <i>Thunderstorms and clouds all around, obscuring vision. Half the hike in rain with Parkas. Very brief stop at Balanced rock. First hike for Mary Eppler, who proved she can keep up with us.</i>  |   |                        |                                     |  |
| -----   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>Jun 27, 2003</b>   | <b>Leader:</b> Jim Gifford  | <b>8 Hikers</b>        | <b>OMH Pikes Peak Training Hike</b> |  |
| <b>Route:</b>   | Dead Chief Trail from Fordyce to GGorge; Sunset Trail from GG to Desoto Park, Cedar Glades, Balanced Rock, Black Snake, West Mt; Mountain Top Trail to West Mountain Trail to Oak Trail to Central ave. |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>13.0 miles</b>   | <b>Difficulty Rating 4</b>  | <b>Scenic Rating 4</b> |                                     |  |
| <i>Beautiful Day - deep blue sky and clear forever. Didnt get too hot (80).<br/>Five tuff climbs; lunch at balanced rock<br/>Loretta dropped out at Black Snake (8 mi); Mike drove her to town and rejoined us at West Mt.<br/>Lemonade at Granny's after. Jim got parking ticket on Central Ave (which was cheaper than the parking garage).</i> |   |                        |                                     |  |
| -----   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>Jan 2, 2003</b>  | <b>Leader:</b> Sammy Engel  | <b>9 Hikers</b>        | <b>OMH Thursday</b>                 |  |
| <b>Route:</b>   | Black Snake Rd trailhead to Cedar Glades to Desoto Park   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>6.3 miles</b>  | <b>Difficulty Rating 3</b>  | <b>Scenic Rating 3</b> |                                     |  |
| <i>Cold, damp morning; started in light rain.</i>   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| -----   |   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>Dec 1, 2001</b>  | <b>Leader:</b> Rex Greer  | <b>?? Hikers</b>       | <b>OMH schedule</b>                 |  |
| <b>Route:</b>   | Desoto Park to Cedar Glades Road and return   |                        |                                     |  |
| <b>6.0 miles</b>  | <b>Difficulty Rating 3</b>  | <b>Scenic Rating 2</b> |                                     |  |